

Proceeding

4th
ICOLE

4th International Conference on
Language Education

Main Theme

**"Curriculum and Materials Development in
Language Education"**

ISBN 978-602-96004-3-8

4-5
DECEMBER
2015

State University of Makassar
Kampus UNM Gunungsari Baru
Jl. A. P. Pettarani, Makassar,
South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

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Students' Voice Towards Good Lecturers' Characteristics: Study at an English Department in Indonesia

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Abstract

This research aimed at finding out students' voice towards good lecturers' characteristics at an English department at the university level in Indonesia and the most dominant good lecturers' characteristics preferred by the students. This research employed qualitative research design and supported by descriptive statistics. There were 46 students of English Department Faculty of Language and Literature, State University of Makassar in 2013 – 2014 academic year participated in this research. The data were obtained using characteristic check list as the instrument in this research. The research findings reveal that students' voices toward good lecturers' characteristics in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at the university are ranging from explaining the lesson objective clearly to provide joke or funny stories while teaching. The most dominant good lecturers' characteristics preferred by the students were gives clear explanation, there were 31 (67.39%) students gave "strongly agree" answer and relaxed, pleasant atmosphere, there were 31 (67.39%) students gave "strongly agree" answer followed by explain the lesson objective clearly, there were 30 (65.21%) students gave "strongly agree" answer and he or she well is well prepared, there were 30 (65.21%) students gave "strongly agree" answer. There were 5 (10.86%) students gave "disagree" answer to checks to confirm student's understanding.

Keywords: students' voice, EFL, lecturers' characteristics, Indonesia

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of educational practices is determined by some factors. One of determinant factors is the teacher at secondary school and lecturer at the university level. This is because teacher or lecturer has vital role in the classroom setting. Sometimes, the low quality of education in Indonesia is addressed to the teacher.

Therefore, the teacher should have professional competence in his or her career as a teacher in the classroom setting. Ashadi argued that professional competence has been a major in the world of education and sooner or later all teachers have to cope with this issue.

Overall Indonesian students exhibit low proficiency in English up on graduation from senior high school is attributed to many factors including: large class sizes, the low English proficiency of teachers, low salary, not enough teacher education to teach the new curriculum, and cultural barriers hindering teachers from adopting a facilitator role in the English as a foreign language (EFL) class (Durdjowidjojo in Larson, 2014). Accordingly, Ashadi stated that our national

education in general and English education in particular has received various criticisms in the areas like curriculum design, teaching process, teacher's quality as well as funding.

One of failure in educational sector in Indonesia today is the low English achievement of secondary school and university students. There are many research findings report this problem. Bellenin Weda (2009) states that English proficiency of senior secondary school graduates was very low. A survey conducted towards English learning in senior secondary schools in eight provinces in Indonesia found that from 4.000 samples, there were only 4,5% of them succeeded to achieve curriculum target, and 95,5% were unsuccessful (Huda in Weda, 2009). Then, Hamied in Weda (2009) who conducted research in the same problem also found that students' achievement level in learning English in general was very low. From reading test given to senior secondary school students in all provinces in Indonesia, Hamied in Weda (2009) found only 22,6% of the students obtained score 7,61 and above; others, 59% obtained score 5,71 – 7,60; 3,8% of them obtained 3,81 – 5,70; and 6,2% obtained score 3,80 and below. Nur in Weda(2009) also argues that the result of the teaching of English in Indonesia has long been considered unsatisfactory. This judgment is based on the fact that the students' achievement at school does not match what most Indonesians expect, namely that the school leavers should be able to use English for various purposes outside the classroom. The evidence of the students' low achievement is indicated in the results of the national final evaluation of both junior and senior high schools with the passing grade 3.01, now 4.01. Another evidence is the low grade average in English at the state university entrance examinations.

Similarly, as stated in Pelita daily newspaper (Weda, 2009) that Indonesian Human Resource is notably isolated because the low ability in communication through international language. This situation is a challenge for us to deal with in order to improve the learner's English proficiency, especially the senior secondary school graduates.

To overcome the problem as stated above, there are a wide variety of efforts employed by the language teachers and learners. On the one hand, the teachers employed a variety of methods in the classroom setting, and on the other hand, the learners employed various learning strategies or styles.

As an important variable in teaching and learning process, a teacher or lecturer needs to implement good characteristics to motivate students to learn in the language classroom. In relation to this, there are many research findings which strongly agree with this statement. Laine in Liando (2010) argues that teacher competence and orientation as new variable when investigating the motivation of secondary and basic school students in Finnish toward English. One of Laine's research findings shows that the teacher was among other variables which proved a powerful factor in increasing student motivation. Gardner and Lambert in Liando (2010) ascertained that "teachers' personalities can certainly affect the attitudes and motivation of students.

This study therefore confines its investigation on the good lecturers' characteristics at English department Faculty of Languages and Literature State University of Makassar, Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This is an endeavor to make an intensive study of students' voice towards good lecturers' characteristics at EFL classroom at the university. Therefore, it would be right so say that good lecturers' characteristics is crucial to be studied because good characteristics employed by lecturers will improve students' English proficiency. This is because, the students are enthusiastic to be involved in the learning process. The research questions of this study are postulated in detail as follows:

- a. What are students' voices toward good lecturers' characteristics at an English Department in Indonesia?
- b. What are the most dominant good lecturers' characteristics preferred by the students?

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia

As an international language, English used in a variety of goals and activities. English also becomes language of economics, technology, communication, socio-cultural aspects, and international politics.

In the neighboring country of Singapore, English has been believed as the language of economic development, especially in relation with "foreign investment, international trade, and business (Chew in Dewi).

In the international context, Indonesian people need to maintain communication to people from other countries where English used as an international language (EIL). Consequently, English becomes a must for people who will go international. This is because, as an international language, English used in the international current of trade, commerce, technology, communication between one person to another, and the most frequently used language of diplomacy.

Based upon the importance of English, the government of the Republic of Indonesia placed English as a compulsory subject at school since the beginning of Indonesian independence.

Currently, English not only taught at secondary school to tertiary level but also to elementary school as a local content subject. There are some elementary school place English as mandatory subject at the first year and some of them put English as a mandatory subject at the third year.

In Indonesia English is taught at schools and universities as a foreign language (EFL). This is because in Indonesia, the pupils have a mother tongue (vernacular) and Indonesian language as a second language used as a means of instruction at schools and universities.

3.2. Why Teacher

One of very vital aspects in the language teaching and learning process in the EFL classroom is a teacher. A teacher is one of the determinants of student's success in the school. Sometimes, the students' failure to pass the examination (the national examination) is addressed to the teachers. This criticism addressed to teachers from year to year.

Our national education in general and English education in particular has received various criticism in the areas like curriculum design, teaching process, teachers' quality as well as funding (Ashadi).

Therefore, the teachers need professional development. Teacher's professional development is closely related to teacher's tasks and their professional roles (Ashadi). Glattorn in Ashadi argues that professional development as the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining experiences and examining his or her teaching systematically.

Despite the many definitions of professional development, from lifelong education to in-service training to staff development, there is one shared aim: professional development is carried out to improve teacher performance and student achievement (Ashadi).

As a foreign or second language educator, teacher should be able to be a role model in the classroom. In education, modeling is very important. Modeling is the process of offering behavior for imitation (Tharp and Gallimore in Arnold, 1999).

Teachers, even in non-teacher fronted classes, are the focus of learners' attention and they inevitably provide models – positive ones to be followed or negative ones to be rejected (Arnold, 1999). Accordingly, Christison in Arnold (1999) stated that 'L2 educators need to model the emotional intelligences they are trying to teach through caring, respectful, and honest interactions with students and colleagues.'

To be a good teacher, he or she needs to nourish and sustain themselves as a first step towards more effective teaching (Arnold, 1999). Therefore, professional development or continuous improvement becomes a must and training and education to a higher education become main priority.

The basic principle of continuous improvement learning is that the teachers need to realize the importance of their own professional growth (Cahyono). Teachers' professional growth includes the ability to understand teaching method (methodic), didactic, and pedagogic.

3.3. A Good Teacher

Meador argues that each teacher is different, but virtually every good teacher has the following twenty-five qualities: a good teacher is accountable, a good teacher is adaptable, a good teacher is caring, a good teacher is compassionate, a good teacher is cooperative, a good teacher is creative, a good teacher is dedicated, a good teacher is determined, a good teacher is empathetic, a good teacher is engaging, a good teacher is evolving, a good teacher is fearless, a good teacher is forgiving, a good teacher is generous, a good teacher has grit, a good teacher is inspirational, a good teacher is joyful, a good teacher is kind, a good teacher is organized, a good teacher is passionate, a good teacher is patient, a good teacher is resilient, a good teacher is resourceful, a good teacher is trustworthy, and a good teacher is vulnerable.

To realize the quality of education in Indonesia, especially to achieve high level competence of secondary school and tertiary level graduates, the English teachers in the classroom should have professional competence and good characteristics.

Professional competence means that the teacher has the ability to implement or transfer his knowledge to his students professionally. Professional teacher is a teacher who has good characteristics during the teaching – learning process in the classroom. He has a variety of traits, among others are: he is well prepared, explain the lesson objective before the class, give clear explanation, motivates the students

students gave response "agree" to this item and there were 15 or 32.60% students gave response "strongly agree."

There was only 1 or 2.17% student gave response "disagree" to item number six "motivates the students to be active in the classroom." There were 16 or 34.78% students gave response "agree" and 29 or 63.04% students gave response "strongly agree." This means that motivation from the teacher becomes one of the teacher's pivotal roles in the classroom. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of the learner are important in the learning process because student's motivation determine the student's success. Most studies report a high correlation between motivation and achievement, and this correlation is taken as evidence that a highly motivated student will do well in school (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). Language learners who are motivated perceive goals of various kinds (Harmer, 1991).

There were 3 or 6.52% students gave response "disagree" to item number 7 "approaches to students." There were 23 or 50% students gave response "agree" and 20 or 43.47% students gave response "strongly agree." This means the teacher needs to approach the students to give direction and detail explanation to the subject.

Only 1 or 2.17 student gave response "disagree" to item number 8 "gives follow up/feed back." There were 28 or 60.86 students gave response "agree" and 17 or 36.95% students gave response "strongly agree." This means the teacher should give feed back to the students' task and homework assignment.

For item number 9 "gives homework assignment," there was 1 or 2.17% student gave response "disagree." There were 34 or 73.91% students gave response "agree" and 11 or 23.91% students gave response "strongly agree." This means the teacher should give homework assignment and exercises to the students to improve students' language communicative competence.

For item number 10 "uses a variety of material," there were 2 or 4.34% students gave response "disagree." There were 25 or 54.34% students gave response "agree" and 19 or 41.30% students gave response "strongly agree." This illustrates that the teacher should prepare various interesting authentic materials or texts. Materials should spark students' interests and fall within the remit of students' language abilities (Hapsari).

None of the students gave response "disagree" to item number 11 "uses audio visual realia." There 29 or 63.04% student gave response "agree" and 16 or 34.78% of them gave response "strongly agree." This means audio visual can nurture students' interest and motivation to learn. This is because through audio visual realia, the teacher can provide wide varieties of classroom activities.

For item number 12 "has classroom management skill," none of the students gave response "disagree." There were 26 or 56.52% students gave response "agree" and 20 or 43.47% students gave response "strongly agree." This means the teacher as a manager in the class should have managerial skill. Classroom management skill determines the students' success. This is because the classroom which is managed well will affect to the classroom good atmosphere and good atmosphere will create good learning condition and good learning condition will affect to students' success in the language learning.

Item number 13 is "relaxed, pleasant atmosphere." None of the students gave response "disagree" to this item. There were 15 or 32.60% students gave response "agree" and 31 or 67.39% students gave response "strongly agree." This reveals that

the classroom should be relaxed and good atmosphere is vital role in the learning process in the classroom setting.

For item number 14 "the teacher is well prepared," only 1 or 2.17% students gave response "disagree." There were 15 or 32.60% students gave response "agree" and 30 or 65.21% students gave response "strongly agree." This symbolizes that a good teacher will prepare everything: material, method, audio visual realia, managerial skill to conduct the material, and so on.

There were 3 or 6.52% response "disagree" to item number 15 "rewards appropriate performance." There were 29 or 63.04% students gave response "agree" and 14 or 30.43% students gave response "strongly agree." This illustrates that the teacher should give reward to students as reinforcement.

For item number 16 "Provides joke or funny stories while teaching," none of the students gave response "disagree." There were 30 or 65.21% students gave response "agree" and 16 or 34.78% students gave response "strongly agree." This reveals that the teacher should create relaxed classroom activities and provide jokes in the class to reduce monotonous classroom activities.

Table 1. Students' Voice toward Good Lecturers' Characteristics

Item Students N= 46	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Explains the lesson objective clearly	0	34.78	65.21
Gives clear explanation	0	32.60	67.39
Explains the lesson systematically	4.34	54.34	41.30
Teacher question/student response	2.17	76.08	21.73
Checks to confirm student's understanding	10.86	56.52	32.60
Motivates the students to be active in learning process/classroom discussion	2.17	34.78	63.04
Approaches the students	6.52	50	43.47
Gives follow up/feed back	2.17	60.86	36.95
Gives homework assignment/individual or group task	2.17	73.91	23.91
Uses a variety of material	4.34	54.34	41.30
Uses audio visual realia	2.17	63.04	34.78
Has class management skill	0	56.52	43.47
Relaxed, pleasant atmosphere	0	32.60	67.39
He or she is well prepared	2.17	32.60	65.21
Rewards appropriate performance	6.52	63.04	30.43
Provides joke or funny stories while teaching	0	65.21	34.78

Chart 1 reveals that the highest frequency of students' response to "disagree" is item number 5 "Checks to confirm student's understanding." There were 5 or 10.86% of students disagreed if the teacher checks the students' understanding. There were 3 or 6.52% students disagreed to item number 7 "approaches the students" and to item number 15 "rewards appropriate performance."

Chart 1. Percentage Distribution of Students' Responses

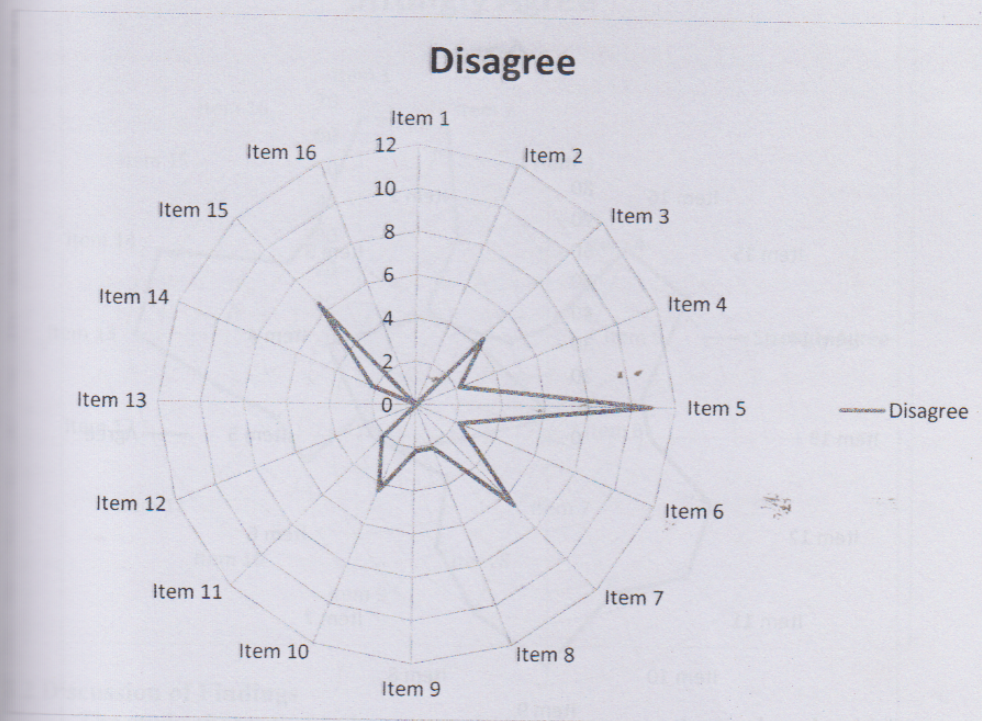


Chart 2 illustrates that the highest frequency of students' response to "agree" is item number 4 with 35 or 76.08% students followed by item number 9 with 34 or 73.91%. The lowest frequency of students' response is item number 13 and 14 with 15 or 32.60% respectively.

Chart 3 illustrates the percentage distribution of students' responses to 16 items. This chart shows that the highest frequency item is number 2 and 13 with 31 or 67.39% responses respectively followed by item number 1 and 14 with 30 or 65.21 responses respectively. The lowest frequency is item number 4 with 10 or 21.73% responses.

The results of the study clearly reveals that the students strongly agree to item number 1, 2, 6, 13, and 14 (for clarity see table 1). They also agree to item number 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, and 16 (for clarity see table 1).

Therefore, the most dominant of good lecturers' characteristics is item number 2 and 13 for "strongly agree" response and the most dominant of good lecturers' characteristic is item number 4 for "agree" response.

Chart 2. Percentage Distribution of Students' Responses

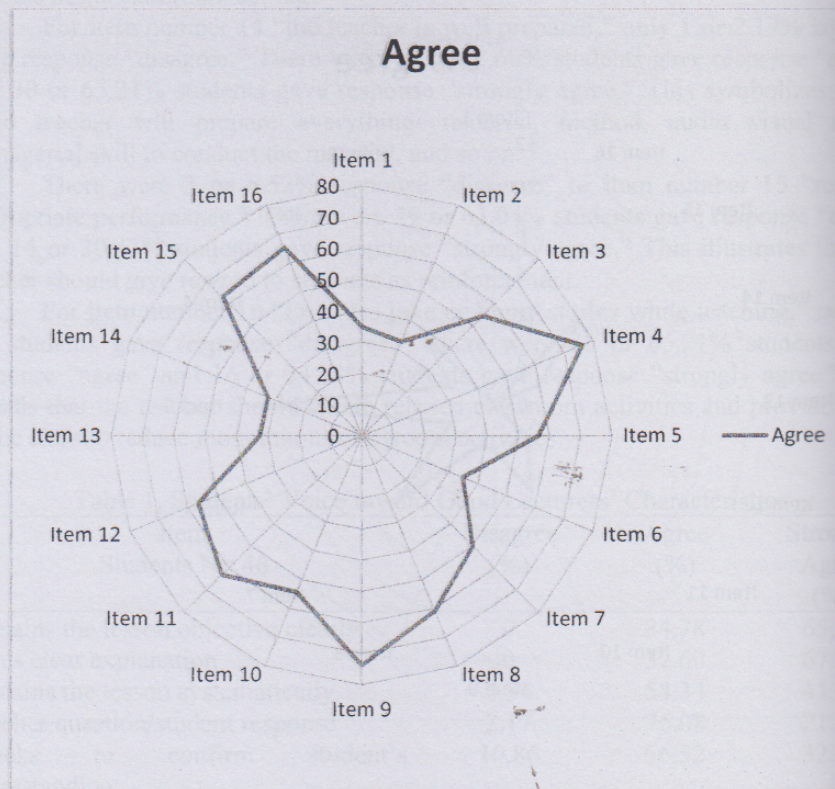
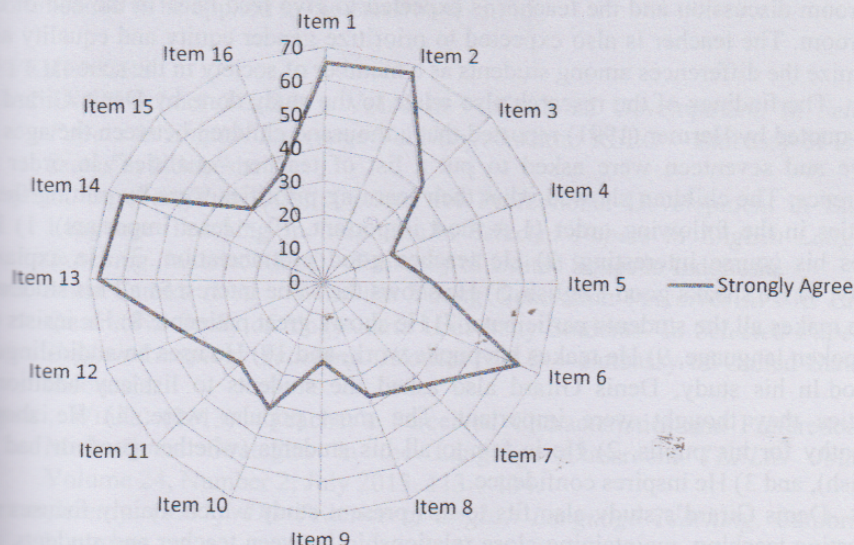


Chart 3. Percentage Distribution of Students' Responses

Strongly Agree



5.2 Discussion of Findings

The study shows that to be success in the classroom, the teacher should have a wide variety of good characteristics. The characteristics are: he is enthusiastic to explain the lesson objective clearly in the beginning of his lecture. He should maintain good communication to the students by presenting material in detail and clear explanation. He needs to be relaxed and becomes student's counterpart in the classroom. The teacher gives homework assignment to his students in other the students can improve their creativity. Reward is also important in the classroom, so that the teacher needs to give reward to the students as reinforcement.

In relation to the characteristics of a great teacher, Miller (2012) revealed that there are ten characteristics of a good teacher, those characteristics are: i) I want a teacher who has a contagious enthusiasm for his teaching, ii) I want a teacher who is creative, iii) I want a teacher who can add pace and humor to the class, iv) I want a teacher who challenges me, v) I want a teacher who is encouraging and patient, and who will not give up on me, vi) I want a teacher who will take an interest in me as a person, vii) I want a teacher who knows grammar well and who can explain something on the spot if necessary, viii) I want a teacher who will take a minute or two to answer a question after class, ix) I want a teacher who will treat me as a person, on an equal basis with all the members of the class, regardless of sex, marital status, race, or my future need for the language, and x) Finally, I want a teacher who will leave his emotional baggage outside the classroom.

Miller believes that the teacher who has enthusiastic to prepare authentic material before the class will stimulate students' participation in the classroom. The teacher who has creativity to create various activities and topics will also develop students' involvement in the teaching – learning process. Joke or humor is also

important in the classroom, so that the teacher is encouraged to make a little joke or humor in his teaching to avoid students' boring.

The teacher needs to maintain good relationship to students through classroom discussion and the teacher is expected to give feed back in the end of the classroom. The teacher is also expected to prioritize gender equity and equality and minimize the differences among students as a member of society in the school.

The findings of the research also relate to the study done by Denis Girard in 1970 quoted by Harmer (1991) reported that a thousand children between the ages of twelve and seventeen were asked to put a list of teacher "qualities" in order of preference. The children showed what their learning priorities were by putting these qualities in the following order (1 = most important, 10 = least important). 1) He makes his course interesting, 2) He teaches good pronunciation, 3) He explains clearly, 4) He speaks good English, 5) He shows the same interest in all his students, 6) He makes all the students participate, 7) He shows great patience, 8) He insists on the spoken language, 9) He makes his pupils work, and 10) He uses an audio-lingual method. In his study, Denis Girard also asked the students to list any additional qualities they thought were important. The most popular were: 1) He shows sympathy for his pupils, 2) He is fair to all his students (whether good or bad at English), and 3) He inspires confidence.

Denis Girard's study also fits to this present study which mainly focuses on interesting teaching, maintaining close relationship between teacher and students, no discrimination in the classroom, either the gender or the students family and social background, rewarding the students as reinforcement, and showing empathy and sympathy to his students.

6. CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to identify lecturers' good characteristics and the most dominant good lecturers' characteristics preferred by the students. This study then comes up with the following conclusions.

The results of the study clearly reveals that the students strongly agree if the teacher explains the lesson objective clearly, gives clear explanation, motivates the students to be active in learning process/classroom discussion, be relaxed, pleasant atmosphere, and he or she is well prepared.

They also agree if the teacher explains the lesson systematically, maintains teacher question/student response, checks to confirm student's understanding, approaches the students, gives follow up/feed back, gives homework assignment/individual or group task, uses a variety of material, uses audio visual realia, has class management skill, rewards appropriate performance, and provides joke or funny stories while teaching.

Therefore, the most dominant of good lecturers' characteristics is item number 2 and 13 for "*strongly agree*" response and the most dominant of good lecturers' characteristic is item number 4 for "*agree*" response.

The implication of this research is to recommend the English lecturers and English teachers to employ good characteristics had by a good or great teacher. The characteristics that the teachers need to apply in the classroom setting are: giving clear explanation, explaining the lesson objective clearly, being relaxed, well prepared, and motivating the students to learn in the teaching – learning process in the classroom and outside the classroom, and so on.

The teachers are also suggested to employ question and answer section in which the teacher asks questions and the students answer the questions. Homework assignment, joke, reward, and presenting material systematically are also recommended to be applied in the classroom setting.

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